

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE
Washington

REPORT OF THE ACCIDENT BOARD
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE

Statement of probable cause concerning an accident which
occurred to a plane of Chicago and Southern Air Lines,
Incorporated, on May 28, 1935 near Nilwood, Illinois

To the Director of Air Commerce.

On May 28, 1935 at approximately 10:26 p.m. at a point about 4 miles SW of Nilwood, Illinois, an airplane of United States registry piloted by a licensed airman, while being operated in scheduled flight carrying mail, express and one non-pay passenger, accidentally collided with the ground with resultant death to the pilot and passenger and the complete destruction of the aircraft and cargo.

The airplane, a Stinson, model SM-6000-B, bore Department of Commerce license number NC-10894 and was being operated between Chicago, Illinois and New Orleans, Louisiana, by the Chicago and Southern Air Lines Incorporated. The pilot, John B. Lynn, held a Department of Commerce transport pilot's license and a scheduled air transport rating. Both the pilot and the passenger, Paul Gardner, were killed.

This flight, originating at Chicago, was cleared for Springfield, Illinois, at 10:00 p.m. No unusual weather was predicted nor is there any evidence that any unusual weather was encountered.

The plane was next observed at a point about two miles from where the accident occurred. Witnesses reported seeing the airplane approach from a North-westerly direction and flying just above the tree tops. Straight ahead from this point were some gulleys about 50 feet deep and a heavily wooded area. It is believed that the pilot saw the terrain ahead because at this time he made a sharp turn to the right which took him away from the trees. From marks on the ground it appears that in this turn he allowed the right wing of the plane to contact the ground. The first mark clearly indicated a wing tip and the green navigation light was found imbedded in the ground at this point. After the first contact the plane evidently cartwheeled and came to rest with the fuselage upside down and with the tail pointing in a direction opposite to the approach.

For some unknown reason the pilot had not followed a direct course from Springfield toward St. Louis. A broken ground fog was reported over this area, but was not sufficient to constitute a hazard to the flight. There was nothing to suggest any reason for the low flying and whether or not the pilot had any intention of landing in the vicinity of the accident.

No flares were dropped and up until the time the ground was contacted, the engines sounded normal to those who heard the airplane.

It is the opinion of the Accident Board that the probable cause of this accident was an unintentional collision with the ground while flying at too low an altitude.